

Remarks at a Luncheon for Representative Connie Morella June 28, 2002

I hate to disagree with our distinguished honoree, but the reason people are here, Connie, is because they love you, they trust you, and like me, want you reelected to the United States Congress.

I appreciate so very much the Morella boys for being here. That, of course, is Tony, the husband, Mark, the son, and Michael, the grandson, who led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. It's good to be here with the Morellas. It's clear that they love each other. They value their family. They understand that in family you can find strength of purpose and love and compassion and comfort. And I want to thank the Morella men for allowing Connie to serve our Nation and encouraging her to serve our Nation. She makes an important contribution, and therefore, you do as well.

I regret that my wife wasn't here today. But I want you to know she's doing fine. I can't tell you how proud I am of the First Lady. She really wasn't interested in politics when I asked her to marry me and frankly didn't care for politicians, if the truth be known. *[Laughter]* But now the people of the country are figuring out why I asked her to marry me. She's calm and steady and a gracious lady. A lot of people wonder why she said yes. *[Laughter]* But we're doing great. Many of you have said—some of you have said you pray for me and my family. It is the greatest gift you can give a President and his family, and for that, I'm grateful.

I appreciate Governor Ehrlich being here today as well—*[laughter]*—I meant Congressman Ehrlich. I thank Congressman Gilchrest, Wayne Gilchrest. There you are, Wayne. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here.

So here's what I like about Connie: She speaks clearly. After all, she was an English professor. *[Laughter]* A lot of people think I probably need to spend a little quality

time with her. *[Laughter]* But she's an independent soul. She's a highly intellectual person who is with you if she thinks you're right and is gracious enough to explain to you when she thinks she's wrong—when you're wrong. And I respect that a lot. And I hope the people of this district respect that about Connie. She's an incredibly thoughtful soul, with a big heart, who cares deeply for the constituents she represents and loves her country too.

You know, I like to tell people, when you find somebody who's good and decent and honorable, you have a civic duty to make sure that that person remains in the Halls of Congress.

I appreciate so very much her focus on homeland defense, and so should you. I mean, the defense of our homeland is an incredibly important part of the national life these days. And after all, Connie represents the National Institutes of Health and does it well, I might add. She understands the important role that the National Institutes of Health can play in fighting off bioterrorism, preparing response for our Nation. She's an advocate of doing what is right in the budget for the National Institutes of Health. For no other reason, people ought to send her back, because she's got a clear vision of the importance of research for our country.

But as well she worked hard right after September the 11th to secure emergency funding for the Montgomery County's local police forces and emergency response teams, those who worked so hard to help rescue and repair lives in the wake of that tragedy.

As you know, I've asked the Congress to think boldly about how best to protect the homeland. I mean, after all, we've got 100 different agencies involved with homeland defense. They're scattered all over Washington. And it seems like to me that

we ought to align authority and responsibility under one Cabinet office, so that we can affect the culture of the agencies that protect the homeland as well as make sure that we can affect the results. And fortunately, Connie understands that. And she is on the House Science and Government Reform Committees, two important committees that will be dealing with this important initiative.

I have been pleased with the response so far out of Congress. Both Republicans and Democrats alike understand that defending the homeland is not a partisan issue. It has nothing to do with political parties. It has everything to do with doing what's right for the American people.

And the good news is, Connie understands that for the good of the country, some are going to have to give up what they call turf. You know, some people are going to have to say, "Well, this—I no longer can have oversight on this jurisdiction." And that's going to be hard. And it's going to be difficult for some Members of the Senate and the House, and I understand that. But fortunately, we've got allies who understand the Nation comes first, and that leaving behind a legacy that will make it easier for future administrations and future Congress to deal with the true threats that face this country is more important than turf. And I want to appreciate Connie Morella's leadership on this issue.

I appreciate so very much her strong commitment to Medicare and seniors who rely upon Medicare and the need for us to have prescription drugs in Medicare. As well I appreciate her strong commitment to making sure that we fulfill the promise of Social Security.

As well I love her passion for education. We worked closely on an education bill that I'm convinced will make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of our fellow citizens. I mean, this was a good piece of legislation. After all, it had to be pretty good, since Senator Edward Kennedy and I traveled around the country

signing the bill. *[Laughter]* I know people in the Crawford coffee shop are wondering, "What the heck's he doing? That guy gets up there and—must've drank the water or something." *[Laughter]* But nevertheless, it's a good piece of legislation, and Connie poured her heart and soul into making sure it's good.

Let me explain it right quick. It says we ought to have high standards for every child in America, not just a few children, not just children from one demographic group but every child. We ought to believe in our heart that every child can learn. She understands and I understand that if you set low standards, you're going to get lousy results. If you believe certain children can't learn, guess what's going to happen? Certain children won't learn. And so we started kind of trying to change the mentality of public education by insisting on the fact that every child can learn.

And then we said something unique. We said, "If you receive Federal money, you've got to measure to see whether or not the children are learning." See, if you've got high standards and high expectations, you want to know. If you've got low standards and low expectations, you don't care. But if you've got high standards, you want to know. And so for the first time, the Federal Government says, "The State of Maryland, you get to measure to show us whether or not children are reading and writing and adding and subtracting."

And you see, if they are, then we'll praise the teachers and praise the plans and herald the curriculum that's working. But if not, we expect something else to happen. We expect there to be a change. We expect for people to say, "Wait a minute. This is unsatisfactory to allow certain children to learn and other children not to learn." You see, the idea of measuring and holding people accountable is to save lives; it's to enforce this belief that every child can learn; it's to make sure we have the highest of high standards.

And finally, in the bill, we say we trust the people of Maryland to chart the path to excellence. We understand that trying to run the public schools out of Washington isn't going to work. We believe in local control of schools. And I appreciate Connie's commitment to education reform.

And finally, she has been a champion of the strong economy. We need to make sure that above all else here domestically, people can find work. You know, this is a town where people love to talk about statistics. Here's my attitude about the workforce: If somebody's looking for work who wants to work and can't find work, we've got a problem. We've got to continue to work to expand the job base.

I appreciate the Members of Congress here who supported the tax relief plan last year. It made sense to let people keep their own money, because when people keep their own money, they get to spend their own money.

And we'll continue to work to open up markets for products manufactured right here in Connie's district, so that we can sell overseas. You see, fearful people build walls around America. Confident people open—tear them down and open up markets. And I'm confident that the entrepreneurs in the State of Maryland and all across the country can compete if given a level playing field. And Connie understands that, and I want to—I appreciate her support for trade measures that the Congress has been working on.

I'm a little concerned about—I'm not concerned about the fundamentals of our economy. I think they're very strong. I think we've got the right fiscal policy in place, the right monetary policy—seems like it's good. People are concerned, however, about whether or not the balance sheets of corporate America are open, whether or not the numbers are real.

Let me tell you how strongly I feel about this: I believe if somebody is running a corporation, if somebody has got responsibilities to shareholders and employees,

they have the responsibility to be above-board at all times, to be frank and honest with all numbers.

We can have all kinds of rules, and we will. I laid out some initiatives in March of this year that will hold people accountable. And our Justice Department will hold people accountable. But corporate America has got to understand there's a higher calling than trying to fudge the numbers—trying to slip a billion here or a billion there and may hope nobody notices—that you have a responsibility in this country to always be aboveboard. We expect high standards in our schools; we expect high standards in corporate America as well. And I intend to enforce the law to make sure that there are high standards.

It is important for our fellow citizens to understand that the foundation for economic growth is strong in America; that our free enterprise system is strong, vibrant; that there's a lot of entrepreneurship that takes place across the country. And it's important for our fellow citizens to understand that, by far, the vast majority of our leaders in the business community are honest and upright people. That's important for them to hear. Just as important for them to hear, when we catch people doing wrong, there will be consequences for those who have done wrong.

So I feel good about our work on the economy. But we won't tire until we kind of boost the confidence of the country and, at the same time, work to continue to expand the job base so people can find work. And Connie Morella has been an advocate for this kind of approach, and I appreciate her leadership in the Congress.

One issue that affects our economy besides the competence and corporate profits, which are improving, is also the American people and the investors are worried about another attack on America. And as you know, we're doing everything we can here at home to button up the homeland.

Connie Morella's a huge supporter of the Federal workers, those who work hard to

help America. And I've got to tell you, people are working overtime on behalf of our citizens. I'm proud of the effort people put in. Listen, we're running down every hint. If we get any kind of hint that somebody's thinking about doing something to this country, we're on it—"we" being hard-working Federal employees like the FBI. People analyze data; there's a lot of people in this town who spend a lot of time on the—now the number one mission of the country, which is to protect our homeland. And I'm proud of their efforts.

But the surest way to protect the homeland, the best way to make sure that America is safe and secure, is to hunt the killers down one by one and bring them to justice, which is precisely what we're going to do.

And we're after them—we're after them. Sometimes you might not know it. After all, this is a different kind of war. This war doesn't have the old troop movements of the past, where you could watch lines of infantry march here or squadrons of airplanes fly there. We're facing a shadowy bunch of killers, and that's all they are, coldblooded killers who hide in caves and send youngsters to their death, who meld into big cities, you know, hide in the buildings hoping nobody knows they're there. And so it takes a while to achieve the battlefield victories, because we've got to change our mindset about what it means to achieve a battlefield victory. Battlefield victories come one person at a time in this war.

So I'm pleased to report, as I did the other day when I spoke to the Nation, that we've got about 2,400 of them so far. These are hardcore killers and their supporters and money raisers, part of their army. And it's not just America; it's our friends and allies who are—like the courageous leader of the Philippines, Gloria Arroyo, who we believe brought to justice the guy who was running this Abu Sayyaf group who managed to kidnap at least two Americans, the Burnhams. And the husband died, unfortunately, on the rescue attempt. But these

people need to be got, and we've got our friends and allies getting them. And that's what we're going to spend our time doing in this administration.

We made great progress in Afghanistan, obviously. I mean, we've still got a lot of work there, no question about it, because we want to leave behind a legacy of—that's safe and stable and secure. And there's still a lot of people there, kind of in caves and moving around, that eventually we're going to bring to justice.

But you've got to tell your sons and daughters that this great Nation went into that country not as conquerors but as liberators. In the midst of all the talk about war, it's important to reassure our youngsters that we don't seek revenge, we seek justice, and that this compassionate Nation want to help people, that we believe in freedom. When people attack our freedoms, we'll respond.

I don't know what got into the minds of the enemy. They must have thought we were so self-absorbed and materialistic that, after September the 11th, all we might do is file a lawsuit or two. They don't understand the character of this Nation and how much we love freedom. And when it comes to our freedoms, we will spend the time necessary to defend our freedoms.

And that's why I've submitted to Congress a significant increase in the defense spending, because I want our troops to have the best pay, the best equipment, the best training possible. And I want to send a message to the world that America is in this fight for freedom for the long pull.

And the House of Representatives passed the defense appropriations bill overwhelmingly, and I want to thank both Republicans and Democrats for voting on that bill. And I expect the Senate to get the defense appropriations bill to my desk quickly, for the good of our planning for this war, for the good of understanding what money is going to be available. Instead of playing politics with the defense appropriations bill, they need to do what the House did and

get it passed in a bipartisan fashion so I can sign it as quickly as possible.

We're making great progress. Like the American people, I'm a patient man. And we're deliberate. I think the American people fully understand the new—the nature of this war. I believe history has called us into action. I mean, I believe history has shined the spotlight on this country, and people are wondering, are we going to blink, or are we going to lead? That's what they're wondering. And there's only one course, and that's lead toward freedom.

There are some true threats that face us, beyond, obviously, this Al Qaida network, and you've heard me speak about them. I believe, for the sake of our children's future, we've got to deal with and be realistic about these countries which develop—harbor the desire to develop weapons of mass destruction. You see, we cannot let America and our friends and allies become blackmailed by the world's worst leaders who harbor the world's worst weapons. And so for the sake of our future, you just need to know that we'll use every tool at our disposal—every tool at our disposal—to make sure that our children can grow up in a free world.

No, we've been given a chance to show the world what we're made out of, and we are. This is a fantastic nation. And I believe that out of the evil done to America will come some incredible good. It's hard for people to probably realize that, but I believe it. I believe we can achieve peace. I believe that if America is tough and firm and resolved, we can achieve peace. We can achieve peace if we speak clearly, no doubt of where we stand. We can achieve peace in parts of the world where people have no hope for peace, where people might have given up.

No, I believe out of the evil done to America can come some incredible good, not only abroad, but I believe here at home too—I believe here at home. This country is so compassionate and decent and kind

that out of the evil done to us can come some incredible good.

We've got to understand in this country, in this land of plenty, there are pockets of despair and hopelessness and addiction. There are people who say, "This American Dream has absolutely nothing to do with me." And that bothers me, and it bothers Connie, too. But you know what I know? I know that our society can change one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. And I know there are thousands and millions of Americans who understand that to fight evil, you can do some good by loving your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And it doesn't take much. It doesn't take much. It doesn't take much to be tolerant to your neighbor. It doesn't take much to mentor a child or to go into a shut-in's house and say, "I love you," to deliver food out of your church or your mosque or your synagogue. It doesn't take much. It takes a commitment to something greater than yourself, is all it takes. It takes a desire to serve your Nation not only as a patriot who is willing to put his hand over his heart on the Pledge of Allegiance but understands that patriotism is serving that person in need. And that's happening in America.

You watch. Out of the evil done to America will come some incredible good in this country. And you know why? Because we are the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. And it is my honor to be your President. And it's Connie's honor to be representing Maryland in the United States Congress.

Thanks for coming, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in Salon 3 at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines; and Abu Sabaya, a leader of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group who was killed June 21 by Philippine military forces. Representative

Morella was a candidate for reelection in Maryland's Eighth Congressional District.

Exchange With Reporters on Departure for Camp David, Maryland June 28, 2002

President's Health

Q. Mr. President, what's the story?

The President. Hold on, I'll tell you.

As you know, I've been recommending that Americans take precautionary measures for their health and that people should be screened on a regular basis, particularly those of us over 50. And tomorrow I'm going to have a colonoscopy at Camp David. It is the third such procedure I've had. The doctor has recommended I have another one, because the last time they found some benign polyps. And so this is kind of a routine physical examination that will be done at Camp David.

I'm going—I'm going to be sedated for a period of time and will transfer power to the Vice President during that time. And I look forward to exercising tomorrow afternoon, after the procedure takes place.

Q. Do you know how long it's going to be, sir?

The President. Well, it's—you know, the last time I did this, it wasn't very long. I mean, the definition of long—the docs will be briefing here pretty soon. But you know, it shouldn't take too long to—

Q. Is there anything that triggered this?

The President. No, not at all, John [John Roberts, CBS News]. I feel great. This is a part of the ongoing—you know, it's a kind of part of the annual physical. And so I just decided to do it at this time; it fit in with my schedule. And I feel great—no signs, no symptoms.

The last time we did one of these colonoscopies, they found benign polyps, and they recommended that—I think it was 2 years ago, and they recommended they

take another look and see if there's anything in there.

Transfer of Powers to the Vice President

Q. Should we read anything into the fact that you are going to transfer the power, the length of time of this?

The President. No, not at all. It's just that I made the decision. We looked at the precedent. I'm the first President to have done so under this type of procedure and/or physical examination. I did so because we're at war, and I just want to be super—you know, super cautious.

And I informed the Vice President of this, and he's fully prepared to—standing by. He'll realize he's not going to be President that long. [*Laughter*]

Q. Is he back in Washington, sir?

The President. He is. Yes, he is.

Q. What time will you be doing this tomorrow?

The President. Well, the time is—you know, I really don't want to put out a time, and I hope you understand why.

Q. Where's the Vice President, here?

The President. He'll be—I'm not sure where he'll be.

Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. We'll hold a briefing. We'll fill you in.

The President. Yes, I need to find out where he's—

President's Health

Q. Any family history of colon cancer?

The President. Let's see, not really. Well, my brother—yes, I had a brother who had colitis, and so there's some history there.

I do recommend and urge that people take—get these precautionary tests and take a look. I had my first “scope,” as we say